

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 3489
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Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Interested parties have suggested the need to protect students from harmful or improper use of technology in classrooms. Technology serves as an instrumental tool in a child's education. Some states, such as Virginia and Maryland, have introduced legislation to develop health and safety best practices for the use of digital devices in schools. It is critical that schools and students are equipped with the appropriate knowledge and guidelines to prevent potential adverse effects associated with the increased use of technology in the classroom.

H.B. 3489 seeks to ensure that school districts and open-enrollment charter schools address the increasing role of technology in classrooms through the use and adoption of best practice technology guidelines.

H.B. 3489 amends current law relating to development of guidelines for the use of digital devices in public schools and a school district or open-enrollment charter school policy for the effective integration of those devices.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 38, Education Code, by adding Section 38.0231, as follows:

Sec. 38.0231. GUIDELINES FOR USE OF DIGITAL DEVICES. (a) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA), in consultation with the Health and Human Services Commission, to develop and distribute model health and safety guidelines that school districts and open-enrollment charter schools may use to determine best practices for the effective integration of digital devices in public schools. Requires that the guidelines:

- (1) be based on evidence-based studies and practices;
- (2) consider the needs of students with intellectual or physical disabilities;
- (3) consider the potential costs of implementation of the guidelines and affordable ways to reduce the hazards associated with the extended use of digital devices; and
- (4) address:
 - (A) digital device use for varying age ranges and developmental levels;
 - (B) the amount of time a student spends using digital devices in the classroom;

- (C) appropriate frequency for breaks from the use of digital devices;
- (D) physical positioning of digital devices in the classroom;
- (E) the use of digital devices to complete homework assignments;
- (F) recommended total daily screen time usage for students;
- (G) recommended practices or software to block access to inappropriate content; and
- (H) recommended teacher training regarding digital device use in the classroom to ensure implementation of the best practices.

(b) Requires the school board of each school district or the governing body of each open-enrollment charter school to adopt a policy for the effective integration of digital devices in the district or school. Authorizes the school board or the governing body, in adopting the policy, to decide whether to adopt the guidelines developed under Subsection (a) for use in the district or school.

(c) Authorizes each school district or open-enrollment charter school that adopts the guidelines developed under Subsection (a) to implement the guidelines in a manner that best meets the district's or charter school's individual needs and the individual needs of students in the district or school, including students with intellectual or physical disabilities.

(d) Requires a school district or open-enrollment charter school, if the district or charter school adopts the guidelines developed under Subsection (a), to post the guidelines publicly on the district's or charter school's Internet website.

SECTION 2. Requires TEA to develop and distribute the guidelines for the use of digital devices required under Section 38.0231, Education Code, as added by this Act, for use beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2021.